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SWAMP THING
1935
50
DC
1985
BY ALAN MOORE, RICK VEITCH & JOHN TOTLEBEN

DAY 1

"DEANNA'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU, AB..."

I MEAN, I KNOW WHAT WITH YOUR HUSBAND'S *ACCIDENT* AND ALL IT'S BEEN PRETTY *ROUGH*, BUT...

WELL, IF WE CAN *HELP* OR ANYTHING...

I'M OKAY, TIM... I'M JUST A BIT WORRIED *MYSELF* RIGHT NOW.

I, UH, GOT THIS *FRIEND* WHO'S SORT OF ON *VACATION* AN' I JUST, Y'KNOW, HOPE THEY GET *BACK* OKAY AND EVERYTHING.

ANY MORE CARROTS THERE?

NOPE.

ALL THE VEGETABLES ARE *GONE*...

GROWTH PATTERNS

SWAMP THING

ORIGINALLY BOTTLED BY WEIN & WRIGHTSON

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DAY 2

"HE'S COMING BACK, JUDITH."

JUDITH?

IT'S A MASSIVE EXTRA-GALACTIC *ENERGY FIELD* THAT GOT DRAWN INSIDE A *BLACK HOLE* EIGHT BILLION YEARS AGO. IT'S NOTHING *SUPERNATURAL* AT ALL.

COME ON, GIVE US A *BREAK*. I SAID HE'S COM...

IT'S *NOT* A *HE!*

YOU'RE *STUPID*, DO YOU *KNOW* THAT?

COMPLETELY *STUPID*, LIKE ALL THE *OTHERS*...

...AND *YES*, I *KNOW* IT'S COMING BACK!

DAY 3

I...AM

BUT..

WHERE AM I?

WHAT.. AM I..?

THE SOIL ABOUT ME... RICH AND WET... HALF-SWALLOWING ME...

I RECOGNIZE... ITS TEXTURE. I... AM IN... THE SWAMP..

I AM... THE SWAMP THING.

HOW STRANGE..

I THOUGHT... THAT I... WAS DEAD.

HOW LONG HAVE WE GOT?

OH GOD, I DON'T KNOW! A YEAR? MAYBE LESS...

BLOODY HELL, JOHN, NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO...

ARE YOU STILL HAVING THE *NIGHTMARES*, THEN?

NO. BUT THAT'S BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO *SLEEP* FOR THREE WEEKS.

PLEASE, JOHN, JUST LEAVE ME ALONE AND GO...

I WILL NEED... TO GROW EYES... TO SEE THE LANDSCAPE ...SURROUNDING ME...

TO SEE THE CIRRUS CLOUDS... HIGH ABOVE... TRAILING LIKE HAIR... ACROSS THE SKY...

I MUST NOT... THINK... TOO MUCH. I WILL... BECOME... EXHAUSTED...

THE SUN BEATS DOWN... WARM... UPON MY TENDER... NEW SKIN...

SLEEP NOW.

SLEEP AND GROW.

DAY 4

ALEC?

ALEC, ARE YOU *AROUND* HERE SOMEPLACE?

I KEEP GETTING *FEELINGS* LIKE YOU'RE SOMEWHERE *NEAR* ME, BUT... I DUNNO, MAYBE I'M JUST...

...IMAGINING...

UH...?

HELLO?

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

DAY 5

"JOHN CUH-CONSTANTINE?

"CUH-COME IN. PUH-PLEASE CUH-CUH-COME IN..."

I'M SORRY ABAH ABAH ABOUT ALL THE MUH-MESS. I DUH-DON'T LET MUH-MOTHER COME IN HERE TO CUH-CLEAN...

WUH-WHEN DID YOU GET IN FUH-FROM LONDON?

YESTERDAY.

JUDITH'S CRACKING. HAVING NIGHTMARES...

NUH-NOT ABOUT A LITTLE BOY WITH HIS HUH-HEAD TWISTED AROUND BUH-BACKWARDS?

SHE DIDN'T SAY.

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND OUT, BENJAMIN?

HE'S CUH-COMING BACK.

GREAT CHU-CTHULHU! WHO SUH-SLEEPS AT R'LYEH... JUST LIKE IN THE BUH-BOOKS OF H.P. LUH-LOVE-CRAFT. EVERYONE THUH-THINKS LOVECRAFT MUH-MADE CTHULHU UP.

...BUH-BUT I KNOW.

SO HOW LONG HAVE WE GOT?

BEFORE HE WUH-WAKES UP? ABOUT TUH-TWELVE MONTHS, ACCORDING TO MY CHUH-CHARTS, AND THEN AFTER THUH-THAT...

UH...WUH-WELL...

A-ACTUALLY, THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AFTER THAT.

SHUH-SHALL I GET MUH-MOTHER TO MAKE US SOME CUH-COFFEE?

DAY 6

BEADS OF WATER... BURST AGAINST MY SKIN... LIKE LARGE... AND DELICATE... BALLOONS...

SHE SHOULD WATER... THE SOIL... AND NOT ME...

IF THE DROPLETS... MAGNIFY... THE SUNLIGHT... I SHALL BURN...

STILL... SHE IS GENTLE... AND LOVING...

TURNING ME... OVER... IN HER HANDS...

PERHAPS CHECKING ...FOR INSECT DAMAGE...

YESTERDAY... APHIDS GNAWED AT ME... IT WAS... UNPLEASANT...

WHAT... IS ABBY... DOING NOW?

INSECTICIDE...

IT STINGS...

I WISH... THAT I COULD TELL HER... NOT TO USE IT...

IF MY EYES... HAD BEEN FORMED... SHE MIGHT... HAVE DAMAGED THEM...

PERHAPS... I SHOULD CONCENTRATE... ON DEVELOPING... VOCAL... APPARATUS...

...SO THAT... I CAN TELL HER... WHERE SHE IS GOING... WRONG.

DAY 7

AWW NO! IS THAT A MOLE?

YOU'VE GOT SOME SORT OF GRUB THAT'S EATEN ITS WAY IN THERE OR SOMETHING?

MAYBE IF I GAVE YOU ANOTHER SQUIRT OF INSECTI-CIDE, THAT WOULD...

I WISH I KNEW *MORE* ABOUT PLANTS, AND ABOUT HOW TO TAKE *CARE* OF YOU.

AABBEEEE

UH... ALEC?

WAS THAT YOU?

THAT LITTLE *SQUEAKY* SOUND?

NO... MORE... SPRAYS...

...STINGS...

OH?

WELL, PARDON ME.

HOW ABOUT "THANKS FOR ALL THE WATER"?

DAY 8

"IT'S GOOD FOR YOU TO SEE ME, SISTER."

NOT AT ALL, MR. CONSTANTINE.

IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, WE MUST ALL OF US DO WHAT WE CAN.

YOU KNOW HE'S COMING BACK, I TAKE IT?

YEAH, WELL, I HAD GATHERED THAT IMPRESSION, YEAH.

THING IS, NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW WHO'S COMING BACK, OR FROM WHERE.

JUDITH SAYS IT'S A SCIENTIFIC FORCE. BENJAMIN COX SAYS IT'S A PRIMEVAL MONSTER.

ALL THEY AGREE ON IS THAT WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWELVE MONTHS.

HMM. LESS, I'D SAY...

SATAN, MR. CONSTANTINE.

THE NAME OF OUR ADVERSARY IS SATAN...

...AND HE'S COMING BACK.

8

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

DAY 9

GOOD MORNING.

LISTEN, I CAN'T STAY TOO LONG TODAY. I HAVE TO GET UP TO THE *ACME*.

HEY, WHAT'RE THOSE SPLOTCHES OF *RED STUFF* UP HERE? THEY LOOK KINDA LIKE...

...EYES?

NOT... WELL...

BUT YES... I...CAN SEE... YOU...

YOU...LOOK... BEAUTIFUL...

ABBY?

WHAT...IS WRONG?

ARE YOU... CRYING?

ALEC...CAN YOU *SEE* ME?

NO, I...I'M *SORRY*, IT'S...

OH GOD, I'M SORRY, I'LL SHUT UP IN A SECOND, REALLY...

IT'S JUST YOUR *VOICE*. YOU SOUND LIKE... *NAHANAHA*... YOU SUH- SOUND LIKE *JIMINY CRICKET*.

HAHAHAHA

hee hee hee

. AND SO I JUST SAT AND WATCHED UNTIL YOU WERE ALL *EATEN* AWAY INTO THIS HORRIBLE BLUE *SLIME*.

I WAS SCARED YOU TOOK SO MANY WEEKS TO COME *BACK*

I WASN'T SURE YOU'D *MAKE* IT.

NEITHER WAS I . I HAD NEVER ATTEMPTED *REGROWTH* BEFORE NEVER. *NEEDED* TO.

UNTIL I WAS *POISONED*. BY THAT TERRIBLE *DERELICT*.

WHAT *BECAME* OF HIM..?

I HEARD THAT HE *DIED*.

ALSO, A RUMOR WENT ROUND *ELYSIUM LAWNS* ABOUT THIS PREGNANT WOMAN AT THE HOSPITAL. THAT WAS CONNECTED SOMEHOW, BUT IT'S ALL SO *CONFUSED*..

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE ROOTED HERE?

PERHAPS . ANOTHER WEEK?

I AM . NOT *CERTAIN* THIS IS . ALL SO *NEW*..

WHY DO.. YOU ASK ..?

OH...NO REASON.

ABBY..?

WHAT.. ?

DAY 11

"YOU'RE FINALLY AWAKE, THEN?"

YOU WERE SO SHATTERED WHEN YOU ARRIVED LAST NIGHT I THOUGHT I'D LET YOU SLEEP AND SAVE THE QUESTIONS FOR LATER.

I GUESS THE SITUATION'S PRETTY BAD, HUH?

ABSOLUTELY BLOODY DISMAL.

THEY'RE ALL GOING CRACKERS, Y'KNOW. EXCEPT BENJAMIN. HE WAS CRACKERS TO START WITH. I SUPPOSE IT'LL ALL BE LEFT UP TO ME IN THE END...

BLOODY AMERICANS. ALL MOUTH AND TROUSERS.

BIGOT.

WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS HOW THESE SOUTH AMERICAN PEOPLE INTEND TO BRING HIM BACK.

TO GENERATE THE ENERGY NECESSARY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, THEY'D HAVE TO INCREASE THE BELIEF-LEVELS OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION!

YEAH, WELL THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO, ISN'T IT? IT'S OBVIOUS.

THEY'LL USE ALL THE CLASSIC FRIGHTENERS... WEREWOLVES, VAMPIRES, HAUNTED HOUSES, DREAMS...

YEAH? WELL, THEY NEEDN'T BOTHER SENDING ME ANY NIGHTMARES.

WITH ME IT'D BE LIKE SENDING COALS TO NEWCASTLE.

DAY 12

I... AWAKEN..

I AM STRIPED... BY THE SHADOWS... OF LATE AFTERNOON ASSIX.. WILL BE HERE... SOON...

SHE IS . REMARKABLE...

ADAPTING... SO QUICKLY... TO A SITUATION.. EVEN I.. AM ONLY STARTING... TO COMPREHEND..

I HAVE.. REGENERATED.. USING PLANT TISSUE... UNTOUCHED... BY THE BIO... RESTORATIVE FORMULA...

I DO NOT... NEED IT . ANYMORE...

I AM LEARNING... SO MUCH... ABOUT WHAT I AM... AND THE KNOWLEDGE... IS GRADUALLY... CHANGING ME...

BUT WHAT... IS IT CHANGING... ME INTO?

WHAT... AM I... BECOMING?

I BIDE MY TIME... IN THIS PLACE... UNTIL I AM GROWN...

...AND I CONSIDER .. THIS ORGANISM... THAT I AM.

SOMETIMES... I AM IN AWE.. AT ITS STRANGENESS... AND COMPLEXITY..

SOMETIMES... I AM ALMOST FRIGHTENED..

... BY MY OWN POSSIBILITIES.

DAY 13

"EMMA, LISTEN, IT'S NO GOOD SITTING AROUND AND FIDGETING. I'VE GOT TO GO."

"LOUISIANA'S A LONG DRIVE, JOHN WHY DON'T YOU WAIT UNTIL MORNING? HEY, C'MON..."

"EMMA, WILL YOU BLOODY LEAVE IT OUT? I'VE GOT TO BE THERE BY TOMORROW MORNING."

"KHMMPH. Y'KNOW, I'M STARTING TO THINK MY DAD WAS RIGHT! DID I TELL YOU WHAT HE SAID ABOUT ENGLISHMEN?"

"YES, YOU DID, NO WE'RE NOT, AND IF I EVER MEET YOUR DAD I'M GOING TO CHIN HIM. PASS ME THOSE SHIRTS."

"GET 'EM YOURSELF LOOK, WHAT HAVE THEY GOT IN LOUISIANA THAT WE DON'T HAVE IN NEW YORK?"

"ALL RIGHT ALL RIGHT, EMMA, YOU ASKED FOR IT...

"YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHY I'M GOING TO LOUISIANA?

"WELL, ALL RIGHT. I'LL TELL YOU.

"YOU SEE, THERE'S THIS WOMAN..."

MORNING, MS. CABLE.

HOW'S THE BOYFRIEND?

ABBY..?

WHO..?

I..I DON'T KNOW. HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU, AND ME. HE SAID..

YOU DARE.. TO THREATEN.. HER?

I SAID I'D TELL THE PEOPLE YOUR MISGUS WORKS FOR ABOUT HER SLEEPING ARRANGEMENT.

I'M A NASTY PIECE OF WORK, CHIEF. ASK ANYBODY.

LOOK, LET'S NOT HAVE ANY AGGRAVATION, EH?

MY NAME'S JOHN CONSTANTINE, AND I THINK WE COULD DO EACH OTHER A FAVOR

MIND IF I SMOKE?

YES.

THAT'S RIGHT, AND SINCE FOR THE NEXT FOUR DAYS YOU'RE GOING TO BE ABOUT AS DANGEROUS AS A TURNIP, THERE'S NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

HOW.. COULD YOU.. HELP ME?

BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, MATE...

...AND YOU DON'T.

THE LEARNING WAS SLOW... AND PAINFUL...

BUT I... KNOW... WHAT... I... AM!

COBBLERS. YOU'RE NOT SMART ENOUGH. LOOK AT HOW LONG IT'S TAKEN YOU TO REALIZE YOU CAN RE-GROW YOURSELF.

AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T WORKED OUT THE NEXT STEP...

NEXT... STEP...?

LOOK, WHAT DO YOU WANT, EH? AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL? IT'S OBVIOUS...

THE NEXT STEP IS FIGURING OUT THAT IF YOU CAN REGROW HERE THEN YOU CAN REGROW ANY-WHERE!

ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

WHY DO I BOTHER? EH? LOOK AT YOU...

LAST PLANT ELEMENTAL IN THE ENTIRE BLOODY WORLD AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT!

TRANSPORT! INSTANT TRANSPORT! YOU LET YOUR BODY DIE IN ONE PLACE, YOU REGROW IT IN ANOTHER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COUNTRY.

YOU MUST THINK SLOWER THAN YOU TALK

EMMA WAS RIGHT. IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME COMING HERE...

WHY... WOULD I... WISH TO...?

"I SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN NEW YORK."

WELL, IT'S BEEN NICE MEETING YOU, BUT I CAN SEE I'VE MADE A MISTAKE.

OF COURSE, YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU'VE MADE A WORSE MISTAKE...

"BUT THAT'S NOT MY PROBLEM."

CONSTRATIME... WAIT...

LET HIM GO, ALEC. HE'S TRYING TO LEAD YOU OK..

"AND I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS."

I'M... SORRY.. ABBY... BUT... I HAVE... TO KNOW...

I... ONLY WISH... TO TALK.. WITH HIM...

"... SO WHERE.. IS THE CHASER..?"

CONSTANTINE COULD YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT MYSELF?

I SAID FORGET IT IT WAS A BAD IDEA..

ANYWAY, I'M NOT A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER. I'VE GOT PLACES TO VISIT...

"PLACES WHERE I'M NEEDED."

I'M TOO BUSY TO SIT EXPLAINING THINGS TO YOU. IF YOU WANT ANSWERS, YOU'LL HAVE TO KEEP UP WITH ME.

NO PROMISES, MIND. MAYBE I'LL GIVE YOU THE ANSWERS, MAYBE I WON'T.

"WE'LL LET IT BE A SURPRISE"

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

THAT'S NOT THE POINT, LOVE. IT'S WHO YOUR BOYFRIEND THINKS ME IS.

...AND UNTIL HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS, THERE'LL BE SOMETHING IN HIS LIFE THAT'S INCOMPLETE

"SOMETHING MISSING."

BUT HOW... SHALL I FIND YOU..?

WELL, THAT MIGHT BE A BIT OF A PROBLEM.

YOU SEE, I MOVE ABOUT A LOT...

"YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR ME.

"I'VE GOT FRIENDS IN LONDON.

"...IN WISCONSIN...

"...IN WASHINGTON..."

"AND IN NEW YORK.

"YOU SEE, I SHARE AN INTEREST WITH SOME VERY UNUSUAL PEOPLE...

"IT OPENS A LOT OF DOORS."

I TELL YOU *WHAT*.. IN A WEEK'S TIME I'LL BE IN A PLACE CALLED *ROSEWOOD*, JUST OUTSIDE *CHICAGO*.

IF YOU CAN MAKE IT, PERHAPS WE'LL HAVE A LITTLE CHAT...

"AND SEE WHAT COMES TO LIGHT.

"BYE FOR NOW YOU TOO, MS CABLE..."

CONSTANTINE? WAIT...

YOU CAN T JUST.. LEAVE ME...

"IN THE DARK..."

ALEC, IT'S NO USE SHOUTING.. HE'S GONE...

"IT'S TOO LATE"

END

AAAEEEAAAA

GET IT AWAY! GET IT AWAY FROM ME!

JUDITH?

NNNUUUUUGH! NNNNUUUUUGHH!!

BENJAMIN?

OH LORD, NOT AGAIN I'LL GO AND FETCH THE TONGUE DEPRESSOR

OH GOD.

SISTER? SISTER ANNE MARIE? YOU'RE HURTING MY BABY

JUDITH, COME ON, DON'T GO OVER THE EDGE...

SON, PLEASE, OPEN YOUR MOUTH..

OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD

SISTER! STOP IT! YOU'RE HURTING HER!

CONTINUED ON 3

PARK

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SON...

EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT...

NOW LOOK!

SHE'S ALL DEAD!

DAY 17

OH WELL...

JUST WHEN I WAS STARTING TO GET USED TO BEING *TALLER* THAN YOU...

BUT I DON'T MIND. IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU *BACK.*

HEY, YOU KNOW, YOU STILL OWE ME A *HONEYMOON.* I MEAN, NOW THAT I'M THE BRIDE OF THE CREATURE I OUGHT TO GET THE *FRINGE BENEFITS...*

I THOUGHT NEXT WEEKEND, IF THE WEATHER HOLDS OUT, WE COULD HEAD OUT TO THAT *LAKE* WE FOUND...

WE COULD JUST, Y'KNOW, SPEND SOME TIME TOGETHER.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

ROSEWOOD...

NOTHING.

WHAT?

ROSEWOOD. I KNOW... THE NAME... FROM SOMEWHERE...

I...AM SORRY... ABBY. WHAT... WERE YOU *SAYING...?*

NEXT: **STILL WATERS...**

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Dear Alan, Steve, John, and crew of SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2:

Just a short note to convey my appreciation for that masterpiece of an annual. I hope that this letter is only one of thousands that you receive praising ST Annual #2. I can't remember being so impressed by a single issue of any title. To put it bluntly: your annual reaffirmed my faith in comic art. Thank you all.

By the way, Alec wasn't the only one crying at the end.

Sincerely,
Matt L. Holmes
1009-301 Base Line Rd. W
London, Ontario, Canada

We didn't get **thousands** *of letters, Matt, but the second SWAMP THING ANNUAL did provoke the most mail received on this title to date. And... so we can squeeze in as many of your varying missives as space permits, I'm going to keep my comments to a minimum.*

*****

Dear Editor,

So this is death! If, in afterlife, we are tied to our corporeal forms, as indicated in SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2, then my life-long fear and loathing of death is warranted. God forbid that Hell be tangible.

Although I am not a religious person, today I begin to devise ways to atone for my sins. You folks are putting out a chiller of a comic book.

Very truly yours,
Jerry Namba
6618 Birchleaf Avenue
Pico Rivera, CA 90660

*****

Dear All,

The second SWAMP THING ANNUAL was more than I'd dared hope for, a fantastic journey into an extremely well thought-out realm. To begin with, the cover set the mood for the story with its hint of Hieronymous Bosch in some of the creatures. The story itself contains some wonderfully evoked moments of pure emotion, ranging from warmth and love to absolute horror. Examples: the beautifully simple acceptance of the "Region of the Just Dead" by the boy, something which his mother could not at first comprehend; and the friendship between Swampy and Alec.

But the most powerful scenes of emotion were those involving Sunderland and Arcane. Sunderland was an almost pathetic figure, someone who saw himself as a leader in life, now reduced to servitude, who believed himself justified in dispensing pain, now condemned to suffer it eternally. Yet his suffering was as nothing compared to Arcane's: with him Alan really brought out the true nature of Hell, the never-ending despair. Arcane's scream on p. 32 could almost be heard coming off the page, it was so intense. Great writing, Alan.

Also excellent was Swampy having to face the results of his handiwork. He was obviously affected by what had happened to Sunderland, as seen in the last panel of p. 30. But it spoke lots for his hatred of Arcane that he took pleasure in seeing him suffering and even more so in telling him that he'd only been in Hell for a day. Ironic, that, since it was hatred that dragged Arcane down to Hell in the first place; but with Swampy the hatred is more than balanced by love. Still, it's to Alan's credit that he hasn't made Swampy simply a force for good/life but rather has given him that hint of brutality with which we can all identify.

Art-wise, the Annual was stunning, especially the parts where Steve and John could really let their imaginations go and create all manner of things as inhabitants of Hell. Special highlights were Alec's Heaven (p. 14), the Spectre (p. 19), and Etrigan (p. 26). There really isn't much I can say about the art, as it was just so beautifully done; all the time Steve and John took off the regular book to work on the Annual really payed dividends. You can see how much they must have enjoyed working on the mystical and infernal sequences.

There's also the story's parallel with Dante's *Divine Comedy*. I was wondering to what degree, if at all, you were going to employ this view of the afterlife and I'm glad you didn't rely exclusively on it. The connections were there, the different guides for different regions, but the Annual's story was unique in just about every other way, most particularly the fact that Dante has just about everything explained to him so that in the end he has a pretty good idea of how the (heliocentric) universe functions, but Swampy is told very little and so the mystery is maintained. Thanks for not throwing in revelations about the universe at every turn just for the sake of extra sensationalization. After all, if someone like Deadman can't get more than just a few pieces of the puzzle, what chance do we have? I'm glad you kept it to a minimum, with a few hints thrown in (such as the "reincarnation option").

Finally, the coloring was superb: the high-quality paper combined with Tatjana's skill brought out some of the most vibrant hues I've seen in a nonglossy paper book. Well done.

So till the next issue of the regular mag, bye now!

Yours sincerely,
Mark Drio
13 Cameron Ave.
Earlwood 2206
Sydney, Australia

Tatjana's coloring never ceases to amaze me, Mark, but the extra-vibrancy this issue was due to a new printing method. The Annual was the second book DC published on the Flexographic press, which uses a water-based ink, instead of an oil-based one. The paper was the same Mando stock we always use on our newsprint line, but it appeared to be whiter and brighter because water-based ink is lighter and cleaner than oil, which tends to absorb into the paper more. Currently, all of DC's mini-series are being printed on the same press.

*****

Dear Karen, Alan, Steve, John, Tatjana, and John,

"Down Amongst the Dead Men" held together—up to a cold point. I could discount it as one opinion (Alan's), but as it's read by so many, touching and influencing in its own medium's subtle guise, I *must* comment.

The artwork offered a nightmarish and grotesque perspective of the afterworld. If one took stock in such dark theology, this view would warrant a goosebump or two: dank, overpopulated with slithering horror.

The writing of Swamp Thing's *Divine Comedy* did have its fascinating moments: the region of the just dead, grazing poltergeist, a flower's beauty making hell bleaker, and Arcane's chilling "yesterday" scream.

The breakdown points were more serious. Deadman's announcement that god was female brought a perceptible yawn; Phantom Stranger's contradiction caused a head shake; heaven's "smallness" was overly pessimistic. Disturbing.

Page 31 raked most. Saying god "cannot *prevent* (each soul's) fall" limits a supposedly all-powerful being. If man creates his individual hell and heaven,

what's the use of god? If god allows suffering and can stop it, if god is *not* parent (creator?), if god didn't *begin* heaven and hell's pattern, then he/she/it is nonexistent or undeserving of worship. For this useless deity allowed Abby to be undeservingly cast into hell. If not for Swamp Thing's love (manipulated by god would destroy the "free will" concept), she would've spent eternity in torment.

I conclude SWAMP THING #2 took place in another dimension, perhaps a parallel earth (Earth-H). And I will always believe love is more powerful than demons or gods. That, at least, was well put across. For the last two pages, I thank you.

Sincerely,
Kevin J. Dooley
5236 Kester Ave. #6
Van Nuys, CA 91411

*****

Dear Alan:

When I read "Anatomy Lesson," I knew you were on to something good. The subsequent issues astounded me, I had no idea how good SWAMP THING could be.

Then I read "Down Amongst the Dead Men" and saw the promise fulfilled. I don't know how you are going to top that. The SWAMP THING ANNUAL was one of the best comics I have seen in my 25 years of reading, and I have read everything.

The scenes of Hell in Marvel and DC comics have never been particularly vile, but the aspects of Hell shown in SWAMP THING ANNUAL were truly inspired. The characterization of The Demon was the best. You took one of the most boring characters in the DC universe and made him interesting. I'm very touchy about Deadman, but you handled him perfectly. I liked the way the Phantom Stranger called Deadman "a young spirit."

Often a great writer is not appreciated until he moves on. I just want you to know you are one of the finest and I look forward to anything you write.

Thanks,
Mike Sangiacomo
454 Spruce St.
Pottstown, PA 19464

*****

Dear Alan, Steve, and John,

This story in SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2 was absolutely and positively one of the best stories that DC or any company has run in recent years. The reason is of course the above-mentioned creative team. No praise high enough can be heaped upon these three, each tops in their respective spots. Alan Moore is the new Edgar Allan Poe, if that's at all possible. His writing is eons ahead of any other writer in the field. It's classic and poetic, horrible and loving, all at the same time. He also is obviously a man of taste, using the ghostly guest stars he did in this issue. I especially appreciated the Deadman appearance. Boston Brand deserves some regular spot in the DC world. I am casting a vote for some such series, and Alan to head it up as writer ... even a mini-series.

Then there's the art. I have said since these two started on Swampy that they would both get high acclaim as soon as the critics and fans noticed ... it appears as though the time has come, because the two of them, plus Alan, are currently up there with Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!* as the most talked-about series in comics. The title has been earned. The things this book produces, such stunning visuals, tragic writing, gripping plot lines, and to think they had to crawl from behind the large shadow cast by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson. They kept Swampy and his cast, but they went on a different eerie path. Friends of mine used to turn their nose up when I praised the current ST series, they claimed it could never compete with the original. Perhaps it can't, but can the original compete with this?

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324

*****

Dear Everyone,

It never fails. When I put down an issue of SWAMP THING, I must stare at the ceiling and think. Or try not to, depending on the issue. When a comic makes me think, I often must write those responsible for my musings with the results. That's why you've been getting so many parcels of squashed dead trees from me. You didn't think your second annual would be an exception, did you? "Sophisticated Suspense" is no idle claim.

Alan, you amaze me. Your writing isn't just poetry; it's a sonnet, Etrigan notwithstanding. Yours is the best spiritual world view I've come across, and I think I'll stick with it. Don't worry, I won't worship you or try to become your disciple or anything like that. (Was that a sigh of disappointment I just heard?) Just thank you for putting things in perspective. I must modify your idea of Hell, though. I rather like Larry Niven's conception of it, that you don't stay forever and can leave any time you want, if you want it enough. You get your escape the old-fashioned way: you earn it.

Swampy's visit to Heaven served to show that Holland truly is dead, and his soul did not transfer to Swamp Thing as some may have speculated. Swampy's familiarity with the afterlife makes me think he relinquished his struggle for humanity too soon. It implies that Swampy is a reincarnated soul, and if I remember my mysticism correctly, only humans have souls. (I have some doubts about that, though, when I consider the dolphins and other intelligences.) Let's hope he realizes that. We've also gotten some excellent insights into the characters of Deadman, the Phantom Stranger, the Spectre, and Etrigan. As we've seen, they all have dear misconceptions, and are surprised when proven wrong. Deadman thinks God is female. The Stranger is shown that Swampy isn't Alec Holland, and that one need *not* enter Hell alone. The Spectre has Jim Corrigan waved in his face. Etrigan believes himself to be half-man, but I suspect that also is a delusion. I wonder how many readers picked up on this theme?

David Alan Wright
39 Howard St.
New Britain, CT 06051

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Dear Alan, Steve, John, Karen, Tatjana, and John (again!),

I just today bought the second SWAMP THING ANNUAL, and, as if you don't know it, you have crafted the single best SWAMP THING story ever done. Aside from featuring two of my all-time favorite comic characters (Swampy and Deadman), you also produced the only incident in my entire reading history (which includes the E.C.'s, Stephen King, et. al.) where I was actually horrified. Arcane asks, "How many years have I been here?" Swamp Thing replies, "Since yesterday." I'm not even sure where the true horror struck me in this scene, only that it did, and hard.

As a side note, the printing seemed unusually crisp this issue, and the color more brilliant than usual (although not the garishness one expects from Baxter books), and this leads me to ask if perhaps you used a different paper stock this time around, or a new printing process, perhaps?

Maybe it's just because it's the best story ever published in a comic book.

Alan Doane
Rt. 40, Box 31a2
Greenwich, NY

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Dear Compadres,

Bravo.

Previously, in all my fifteen years as a comic book collector, I had not once savored so well-scripted a story, and it took my mother to explain to me just what it was that I'd gone through! She never reads comics, but I own 800. Yet after I read her SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2, she called your comic a mythology, and it struck me.

So now I realize what your comic book is. After countless attempts, a comic book has become mythology's natural extension. Alan Moore, my inspiration for wanting to become a comic book writer, by his poetic touches, and Stephen and John for their passionate rendering of Swamp's macabre fabric, are the best team for this book.

Very Truly Yours,
Arthur Salazar

NEXT: A subterranean vampire town, a bizarre "mating" ritual, plus grotesqueries galore as Swamp Thing makes his first stop in the "American Gothic"! See you then—Karen